

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, May 14, 1898, with transcript

Copy of a "Journal for Mabel" in Dr. Bell's handwriting. Evidently a diary of his daily activities written to keep Mrs. Bell posted. Beinn Bhreagh, C. B. Saturday, May 14, 1898. At. B. B. Hall. (continued)

Grand impromptu fire drill — for benefit of my father and Mrs. Bell. Present also Mr. Blanchard, Douglas and Lucien McCurdy, Lina McCurdy, and Bessie Macrae. My father and Mr. Blanchard noted time after fire signal was given. Duncan and John McDermid had a stream of water playing on roof within sixty seconds. Mr. McInnis and Angus Buchanan arrived in buggy with horse at a gallop just 5 minutes after telephone call, and John McKillop appeared from top of mountain in 5½ minutes out of breath having run the whole way. He then manfully went up a ladder with the hose to play the stream right over the top of the house. The water at first fell short of the ridge of the roof — and returning swept down the roof in a regular flood deluging John from head to foot! However, he went at it again with greater precautions and I was pleased to see the stream clear the ridge and stream down on the other side over the porch on the verandah. We experimented with the stream for about 20 minutes — and found that the level of the reservoir had not perceptibly fallen. Lucien and Douglas reported a fall of ½ inch! To test the capacity of the reservoir we should have diverted the stream flowing into it. This unfortunately we neglected to do — so experiment does not tell us anything of the capacity of the reservoir to sustain a stream.

2

A quiet day. Late in the afternoon Frank, Maud and Ethel McKeen arrived and stayed to dinner. Talkey-palkey and music till late. Had a splendid time — and the McKeens enjoyed their visit. My father was much pleased — and Mrs. Bell too seemed to enjoy her

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young company. (By the by Ethel is not engaged to Maud's Mr. Norwood, and Maud's engagement has been broken off.)

Mr. Atwater turned up late in the evening and devoted himself to Mrs. Bell. All the young people went upon a foraging expedition before driving home. Mr. Atwater stayed later in order to try the telescope with me — and stayed all night.

Had a glorious view of Jupiter. Could make out his cloud belts and four of his five moons well.

Then turned the telescope on another object which seemed to have a ruddy light — and I thought it might turn out to be Mars. It was evidently a planet as it developed a disk — but the disk was not round but elongated with two black marks upon it like this [???] Couldn't imagine what it was I had struck — but with higher power developed it into Saturn with his ring beautifully placed for observation — looking like this [???]

I can now appreciate Galileo's feelings when he first saw the “triple-planet” through a telescope. The night was cold, raw and damp — or rather a heavy dew, made its appearance within the Observatory and outside — and I was not clothed 3 properly — and thought it best to postpone further observations until I could find my “Observatory breeches!” made of woolen rugs.

Monday, May 16th, 1898

Sunday night (or rather Monday morning!) had a vivid dream. Had been talking with Mr. Ellis about building a kite with wing surfaces equal in area to the sails of his boat — and then trying him a race. He to sail his boat on the same tacks with me — my boat to be sailed by the kite. I dreamed that the giant kite was up in the air attached by a rope to the “Jallan — Jay — Booy” — and as I let the rope out with a crank — I saw a portion come out of the reel — fraged — and about to break — so I grabbed the rope just above the fraged part — just as it was about to break. In an instant I was carried up into the air — the

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rope running out behind me. 4 The rope caught in the reel — and as the tension increased I was raised higher and higher to a height of 50 or 60 feet — and then the tension became too great and the rope parted at the fraged portion. I swung right under the kite at a great height above the water — with hardly strength to hold on. Fortunately the kite began to settle down quite gently and I soon found myself in the water holding on to the rope. The moment the kite was relieved of my weight it rose again restrained by the resistance of my body in the water and I found myself being towed by the kite in the middle of the Little Bras d' Or Lake just off the Point — half-way between the Point and Spectacle Island.

To let go, I felt, might be death — for I could hardly hope to swim ashore in my clothes — and the empty boat was far away. My only chance was to hold on. And so with desperate energy I clutched the rope and was towed along until I was stranded on the shore of Baddeck Bay, near the old church. After this novel experience I was almost sorry to awake and find it all a dream.

Mr. and Mrs. Macdougall called on Mrs. Bell. I was at Laboratory and did not see them. Letter received from Mr. Blanchard requesting on your behalf of people of Baddeck, that your war telegrams be made public by being posted up in the window of McKay's store to be headed "Beinn Bhreagh Bulletins." I said — "Certainly."

5

Klondike story. A klondike miner was offered eleven hundred dollars for his miserably little shanty — but he delayed over night intending to accept in the morning. He built a good fire to celebrate his last night in the shanty — but it was so cold that the smoke froze to a height of fifty feet — and tumbling down on the roof of his shanty — crushed it to pieces!

Tuesday, May 17th, 1898.

Been at laboratory all day. Long telegram from you announcing Spanish Fleet at Gulf of Venezuela — Sampson's at Haiti. Spaniards mobbed postman (?) of British Fleet at (?)

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John McKillop called here late tonight from town. Says your telegram was displayed in the window of McKay's store as a "Beinn Bhreagh Bulletin" — on a sheet as large as a page of the New York Herald — and that there was quite a crowd in front of it all the evening. Country people copying the information into note-books for home consumption. The town people seem to be as eager for news as we all are here.

AGB.